

The IEP Meeting Playbook

A Parent's Guide to Confident Advocacy



Phase 1: Pre-Meeting Preparation

(2-4 Weeks Before)

Gather & Review Your Documents

Collect all relevant paperwork in one place. This "binder" should include:

Current and Past IEPs: Read through them to see what has worked and what hasn't.

School Evaluations: Reports from the school psychologist, special education teacher, therapists, etc.

Independent Evaluations: Any assessments you've had done privately.

Report Cards & Progress Reports: Look for patterns and track progress on past IEP goals.

Work Samples: Collect examples of homework, tests, and projects that show both strengths and challenges.

Communication Log: Notes from emails or calls with teachers and staff.

Write a Parent Input Statement

This is one of the most powerful tools you have. It's a one-page summary of your perspective that you can share with the team before or at the start of the meeting. Include:

Your Child's Strengths & Interests: Start with the positive. What do they love? What are they good at?

Your Concerns: Clearly and concisely list your primary concerns, both academic and functional (e.g., social skills, organization).

Your Vision for Your Child: What do you hope for them to achieve this year? In the future?

Suggestions for Goals & Strategies: What do you think would help your child succeed?

Review the Draft IEP & Prepare Your Agenda

The school should send you a draft of the proposed IEP and a list of who will be at the meeting.

Read the Draft Carefully: Use a highlighter to mark areas you have questions about or disagree with. Pay close attention to the **Present Levels of Performance (PLOP)** section—does it accurately describe your child?

Create Your Own Agenda: Based on your review, jot down your key talking points. What are your top 3 priorities for this meeting?

Email the Case Manager

Send a brief, positive email to the IEP case manager (2-3 days before).

Confirm you will be attending.

Attach your Parent Input Statement.

Mention your top 1-2 priorities so they can be prepared to discuss them.



Phase 2: During the Meeting

('Game Day')

Set a Positive Tone

Introduce Yourself: If there are new faces, make sure everyone knows who you are.

Start with a Positive Remark: Thank the team for their time and share a brief, positive anecdote about your child or their teacher.

Share Your Vision: Briefly state your overall hope for your child's success.

Be an Active, Not a Passive, Participant

Ask Questions: If you hear an acronym or term you don't understand, stop and ask, "Can you please explain what that means?"

Refer to Your Notes: Use your agenda to make sure all your points are addressed.

Focus on the "I" in IEP: The plan is *Individualized*. If a proposed goal or service doesn't seem right for your child, say so and explain why. For example, "I'm concerned that goal is too easy. Based on their last progress report, they've already mastered that skill. Can we make it more challenging?"

Know What You're Agreeing To

Don't Feel Rushed: You do not have to sign the IEP at the end of the meeting. You have the right to take it home, review it, and ask for another meeting if needed.

Read Before You Sign: If you do feel comfortable, read the attendance sheet to ensure all required members are present. When you sign the IEP, you can write "I agree with the IEP in part, but not with..." and list any specific areas of disagreement.

Request a Copy: Always leave with a copy of the document you signed.

Handling Disagreements

If you disagree with the team, stay calm and professional.

Use Data: Refer to your documents. "The evaluation from Dr. Smith on page 4 recommends a different approach. Can we discuss that?"

Ask for a "Parking Lot": If you're stuck on an issue, suggest putting it in a "parking lot" to revisit later or schedule a separate meeting to resolve.

Know Your Rights: You have the right to disagree, request mediation, or file a due process complaint.



Phase 3: Post-Meeting Follow-Up

Send a Follow-Up Email

Within 24 hours, send an email to the case manager.
Thank the team again for their time and collaboration.
Summarize the key decisions and action items in writing. This creates a paper trail.
If you took the IEP home to review, state when they can expect to hear from you.

Organize & Monitor

File Everything: Place the new IEP and your meeting notes in your binder.
Share with Your Child: Discuss the new goals and accommodations with your child in an age-appropriate way.
Check In Regularly: Don't wait for the next formal progress report. Email the teacher or case manager every few weeks to ask how things are going with the new plan.